



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Take Care of Your Mental Health

Sterling, Colo. – May 18, 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges as well as questions. The terms ‘pandemic’ and ‘epidemic’ are being used but what do these words mean? An epidemic is a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease within a community, population or region at a particular time while a pandemic is a global outbreak. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect people and spreads between people because there is little or no pre-existing immunity against the new virus. A pandemic is an epidemic that travels. For example, when COVID-19 was limited to Wuhan, China, it was an epidemic and then when it geographically spread it turned into a pandemic.

One of the resulting challenges is the fact that rather than COVID-19 being limited to one particular community, population or region, this is global. Have you had the desire to run away? Where would you go?

As human beings we like certainty. It is natural for us to want to know what is happening when and to notice things that feel threatening to us. When things feel

uncertain or when we don't generally feel safe, it is normal to feel stress. All of us have the fight or flight response wiring to protect us.

Anxiety often results from a sense of what we think we should be able to control, but can't. COVID-19 has many of us worried and feeling helpless about what will happen or what we can do to prevent further stress. Our mental health can suffer. It is important to remember that we can always choose our response. If you are struggling, here are some things you can do to take care of yourself and your mental health as we face uncertainty:

1. Separate what is in your control from what is not. There are things you can do, and it is helpful to focus on those.
2. Do what helps you feel a sense of safety. This will be different for everyone and it is important to not compare yourself to others. It is okay if you have decided that what makes you feel safe is to limit attendance in online or virtual events or small groups, but make sure you separate when you are isolating based on potential for sickness versus isolating because it is a part of depression.
3. Get outside in nature – even a walk out to your mailbox can give you some fresh air. Exercise can help both your physical and mental health.
4. Challenge yourself to stay in the present. Perhaps your worry is compounding because you are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. Gently bring yourself back to the present moment when you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened yet.
5. Stay connected and reach out if you need more support. Talk to trusted friends about what you are feeling. If you are struggling, it is okay to reach out to a mental health professional for support. For a list of local mental health professionals go to <https://www.nchd.org/behavioralhealth>.

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